

Unique Gordons Pond Trail opens at Cape Henlopen State Park

Trail users, officials, residents celebrate long-awaited connector

CAPE HENLOPEN STATE PARK (June 18, 2014) – On the eve of Cape Henlopen State Park's 50th anniversary, hiking and biking trail fans, elected officials, park visitors and local residents today came out to celebrate the long anticipated official opening of the Gordons Pond Trail at the park.

The new 3.2-mile trail is part of Governor Jack Markell's Trails and Pathways Initiative, providing a key link in a 15-mile regional trail system connecting Lewes and Rehoboth Beach including the existing Junction and Breakwater Trail. The trail extends from the wildlife observation platform at the Gordons Pond area to the Walking Dune Trail near Herring Point in the park. It includes a boardwalk featuring two observation lookouts.

"The Gordons Pond Trail offers an outstanding opportunity for residents and visitors alike to enjoy the outdoors and experience the natural beauty of our state," said Governor Jack Markell. "Investments in our trails and pathways provide a tremendous return, promoting healthier lifestyles, a cleaner environment, and a stronger economy."

The new trail replaces an existing primitive trail which traveled through dune fields and was open only part of the year. Nearly a half of a mile of trail is an elevated boardwalk constructed with a special decking material that light can penetrate, allowing plants to grow below and minimizing impact to the environment. In addition, 2.7 miles

of trail is constructed of fine crushed stone. The trail is open to walkers, runners and bicyclists whenever the park is open.

“This is without a doubt one of the most spectacular trails our state has to offer, and it will surely be a major attraction for Delawareans and visitors enjoying this part of our state,” said DNREC Secretary Collin O’Mara. “The trail provides a car-free connection between two major beach communities and combines some of the most majestic views with healthy active recreation.”

The Gordons Pond Trail connection was first noted in a 1974 Bikeway report to the General Assembly. It was examined again in 1990. The final route was developed by a team of DNREC resource specialists in 2010, and final trail design began in 2012.

“Trails are a wonderful year-long resource for recreational walking and hiking, which improves physical and mental health for people of all ages,” said Gary Kirk, Environment Chair of the Wilmington Trail Club. “The Gordons Pond Trail is readily accessible, flat, and in a mostly natural setting, so it will be a magnet not just for Delaware residents but also for the many visitors each year to the Delaware beaches.”

“The Gordons Pond Trail is a major enhancement in the outdoor recreational opportunities in this area,” said John Kurpjuweit, president of Sussex Cyclists. “It will greatly add to the outstanding quality of life in Sussex County. Whether cycling, running or walking, trail users now have additional means to improve their health and fitness, or simply to enjoy the beauty of coastal Delaware.”

“This new trail addition is going to be a wonderful thing for runners,” said Mary Beth Evans, owner of the Rehoboth Beach Running Company. “It will be great to hop on the trail and run into Cape Henlopen State Park. I love running somewhere

instead of driving.”

“I’m so excited that the trail is open,” said Amy Linzey, a local runner and triathlete. “It’s beautiful! It’s so nice to have one big loop to run and bike on now.”

Cape Henlopen State Park draws more than 1.2 million visitors a year. The park comprises 5,320 acres with swimming beaches, surf-fishing areas, fishing pier, the Seaside Nature Center, a tent and RV campground, youth camps, and historic Fort Miles. The Gordons Pond Trail joins a network of nearly 16 miles of hiking, biking and nature trails in the park, including the 3-mile Bike Loop Trail; the half-mile Seaside Nature Trail; the 2-mile Pinelands Nature Trail; the 1.6-mile Walking Dune Trail; the half-mile Salt Marsh Spur; and the 5-mile Junction & Breakwater Trail east of the Lewes and Rehoboth Canal.

Project design and construction costs came from the Governor’s Trails & Pathways Bond Bill funds for state park trails. Project design and construction totaled \$3.48 million. The trail was designed by Delaware engineering firm RK&K, and was constructed by Conventional Builders Inc., also of Delaware.